

France-Merrick Commitment to Maryland Law School Comes at

"Critical Moment"

The School of Law's Building Campaign was given a "jump start" with the announcement of a \$2.5 million commitment from the France-Merrick Foundations of Baltimore.

Walter D. Pinkard Jr., vice president and secretary of the France-Merrick Foundations, noted the school's record of producing leaders of the Baltimore region. "You expect to find law schools educating lawyers and judges," says Pinkard, "but what is unusual here is the Maryland Law School's tradition of educating Maryland's business, government and philanthropic leaders."

The building to be constructed also will house the Public Service Research Center of the University of Maryland School of Social Work. The France-Merrick Foundations have supported both the law school and the social work school in the past.

The gift comes at "A Critical Moment," the theme chosen for the School of Law's Capital Campaign. The Maryland General Assembly last year approved preliminary planning funds for a \$38.2 million facility, to be located on the same site as the current law school building, but only if the law school and social work school raise \$9.8 million in private funds to support the project.

Frank Burch, managing partner in the state's largest law firm, Piper & Marbury, chairs the law school's capital cam-



Walter D. Pinkard Jr., vice president and secretary of the France-Merrick Foundations; Paul D. Bekman '71; Frank B. Burch Jr. '74; and Dean Donald G. Gifford

paign and was instrumental in encouraging France-Merrick to make the commitment to the law school. "We were able to convince the foundations what a law school means to a city," says Burch. "If Baltimore is to be a thriving legal and economic center, it needs a first-rate law school."

"This new building is not about increasing the size of the graduating class," says Gifford. "In fact, we are probably the only law school in the Baltimore and Washington area that has not significantly increased in size over the last 20 years as the number of applications to law school increased so dramatically. Instead," notes Gifford, "we have used the increase in applications to be more selective, improving the quality of our student body."

The building is a personal issue for campaign co-chair Paul Bekman, a plaintiff's lawyer and a partner at Israelson, Salsbury, Clements

and Bekman, who currently serves as president of the Maryland State Bar Association. His daughter, Jodie, is a student in the law school and its clinical programs this year. "Maryland has great faculty and great programs," says Bekman. "Now we need to find a quality facility in which to put them."

The "quiet phase" of the law school's building campaign, with a goal of \$8 million, began last April at the end of the legislative session. With the commitment from the France-Merrick Foundations, the law school already has pledges of \$4.7 million toward its goal. The social work school, with a campaign goal of \$1.8 million, has pledges in excess of \$550,000.

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